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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NDJAMENA 000590

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SUBJECT: CHAD: REFUGEE PROTECTION AND IDP PULL

REF: A. NDJAMENA 547

[1](#)B. NDJAMENA 576

NDJAMENA 00000590 001.2 OF 002

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Ideas for immediate refugee protection are few and far between, according to those working the issue in Ndjamena. UNHCR will explore devoting more resources to paying and equipping gendarmes. The AU could be pressed to send more AMIS missions across the border. Chadian Foreign Minister says if Sudan opposes blue hats, send them to Chad. Meanwhile, ICRC worries that insecurity east of Goz Beida is prompting the UN agencies to move to providing IDP assistance in Goz Beida, where it is safer for international personnel but far from the border area. Having come out strongly in our recent press guidance on our commitment to protection of refugees, we need a plan for how to follow through. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) ICRC and UNHCR representatives called on Ambassador Wall April 20 and 21. All agreed that whatever else President Deby accomplished with his combative announcement April 15 (rupture with Sudan, oil deadline, refugees deadline -- the latter two since modified), he had gotten attention and, in particular, drawn international attention to the problem of protection for the refugees strung out in 12 camps along the eastern border.

UNHCR

[1](#)3. (SBU) The Ambassador asked UNHCR representatives Ana Liria-Franch and Rufin-Gilbert Loubaki, in view of recent press statements committing the United States to protecting the refugees, what were we actually able to do? He had seen Chadian Foreign Minister Allam-mi earlier in the day, April 21, and Allam-mi had said that, if Sudan was reluctant to have UN forces in Darfur, Chad would be happy to welcome UN forces to Chad. UN forces could take care of protecting the refugees, which Allam-mi readily said Chad was not able to do. Liria-Franch said this idea should be considered, but it had two flaws, first that it would take a long time and the need was immediate, and second that it would not address

protecting the refugees in Darfur.

¶4. (SBU) Liria-Franch said that the AU two days earlier had sent a mission by helicopter from Nyala to the refugee camps in Chad for a brief monitoring exercise. She suggested that the AU could be requested to regularize such (now-infrequent) visits and make them more numerous, say twice a week, dedicating a helicopter to Goz Beida.

¶5. (SBU) The Ambassador asked whether UNHCR could provide significantly more assistance to Chadian gendarmes in the camps. Liria-Franch said that UNHCR already paid for 235 unarmed gendarmes (between 15 and 20 per camp), who supplemented the refugee surveillance committees in each camp. They mainly provided security within the camps and within a five-kilometer belt around the camps, settling intra-camp strife and handling grievances with the local population. Now they were going to be used also to escort convoys between cities, especially following the increase in carjackings (two cars of MSF and CARE had been taken the previous day in the Iriba area). The Minister of Territorial Administration had repeatedly pressed for a doubling of this gendarme assistance, in answer to every plea for greater protection of the camps. Liria-Franch said that she had been reluctant to accede to this request as it was open-ended, was a diversion of limited resources away from direct humanitarian assistance, and was not an attractive use of funds from the donor standpoint. However, she said, it now appeared necessary.

¶6. (SBU) Liria-Franch said UNHCR had been giving consideration to moving the Goz Amer camp -- the most exposed from the standpoint of attack from the east -- north to Gaga. However, moving 15,000 people at a time of heightened insecurity posed a daunting challenge. Meanwhile, the large stocks of food at Goz Amer (built up in anticipation of the coming rainy season) comprised a tempting target for Arab

NDJAMENA 00000590 002.2 OF 002

marauders. The rains would cut Goz Amer off from Goz Beida for periods of time. Liria-Franch wondered whether the Chadian rebels might also target the area.

¶7. (SBU) The Ambassador said that he had just visited the Goz Beida/Goz Amer area April 19 and had talked to refugees and IDPs. It was evident that the IDP problem was not relenting. Attacks on them were continuing, even if such attacks were far from being as systematic, sweeping, and brutal as had occurred in Darfur. Among the IDPs, the overwhelming concern was security rather than humanitarian assistance; if they could not go back home before the rains, they would stay where they had arrived, plant as best they could, and pass the rainy season there, hoping to go home later. He asked whether UN-provided assistance in the Goz Beida area were beginning to be a "pull factor," drawing to Goz Beida IDPs who would otherwise remain closer to the border. Liria-Franch said she did not believe that enough assistance was being provided as yet to account for the flow of IDPs toward Goz Beida, but UN agencies were being heavily criticized about not doing enough to assist the IDPs. Assistance would therefore grow, and the pull factor would grow.

ICRC

¶8. (SBU) ICRC's head of delegation, Thomas Merkelbach, told the Ambassador April 20 that while the number of IDP's in the Goz Beida area was increasing, the bulk of the IDPs still remained along the border or along the Wadi Kadja, particularly at Koloy. The Dadjo people affected by the attacks since December still, by and large, wanted to stay close to their homes along the border. Meetings he had had with the UN agencies suggested that these agencies were under increasing pressure to begin significant assistance programs for the IDPs, but since the border area was too insecure for UN personnel, assistance would have to be provided where it

was deemed adequately secure, i.e., in Goz Beida. Previous policy coordinated among the UN agencies and NGOs was that any assistance would be provided as close to the border as possible, to obviate the pull factor. That policy now appeared to be being eroded. Merkelbach said it was essential to plan for IDP assistance and bring in food and supplies adequate to meet the anticipated need; ICRC was planning for 40,000 IDPs while UNHCR for 60,000 (UNHCR opting for higher numbers since it typically received less than it asked for). However, timing of where and how much assistance to provide was vital, and assistance ought not to be provided simply because it was necessary to be seen to be responding and especially to do so at a place where it was convenient for the UN or NGOs rather than for the IDPs. These IDPs were still refreshingly keen to return home and had not been asking for assistance. However, a significant program of assistance in Goz Beida might quickly turn them into "professional beneficiaries."

¶9. (SBU) Merkelbach said he had sent his staff back to Dogdore (between Goz Amer and the border) and he was debating whether it was safe enough to send them also back to Koloy. (He needed more assurance from contacts among janjaweed and rebels, as well as the Dadjos and Chadian authorities, that an ICRC presence would be acceptable. He expected to send his staff back to Koloy soon, barring a marked security deterioration, while the UN agencies were not likely to be allowed to go to Koloy any time soon.) His staff reported that the IDP population at Dogdore had jumped from 2500 to 4000 in a relatively short period. There had been three or four attacks on villages near the border north of Daguessa, following the April 10 rebel raid on Koukou and Goz Amer. These villages had not been attacked previously.

¶10. (SBU) Comment: Our press statements take a forthright stand on protection of refugees. We now need to develop a plan for making good on that commitment.
WALL